

**THE BULLETIN  
OF THE**

*Common Ground*

**COUNCIL OF  
CHRISTIANS AND JEWS**

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## A CHERISHED DREAM

Freedom, the first victim of every dictatorship and an inevitable casualty in every war, remains as it has always been, man's most cherished dream and his most perplexing problem. All men hope for freedom, but few appreciate how great are the difficulties involved in its realisation. Nowhere is this dilemma more apparent than in the matter of religious belief and practice, and in the mutual relations between different religious communities.

It was natural, therefore, that the subject of religious liberty should occupy an important place in the thought of the recent International Conference of Christians and Jews. The text of the approved report of the Commission which worked on this problem at Oxford immediately follows this article. Here we offer a few comments on the report itself and one or two notes on subsequent developments.

There is, of course, an inner freedom of mind and conscience rooted in religious convictions which, if sufficiently strongly held, produces an unassailable liberty of private faith and worship which is proof against all outward persecution and attack. Such freedom

was acknowledged, but not discussed, by the Commission at Oxford, whose attention was concentrated on what it described in one of its documents as "the external freedom of religious practice."

In this field there are many familiar and thorny problems, some much more urgent than others. Most urgent are those which concern the rights of religious communities in countries where the policy of the State, if not anti-religious in the broadest sense of the term, is definitely hostile to certain religious bodies. The persecution of Catholics in Eastern Europe to-day is a most tragic case in point.

In the same field of relations between religious communities and the State are the problems connected with the nature and place of religious instruction in State Schools and the relation between the denominational School and the State educational system, particularly from the point of view of grant aid.

Another set of problems centres around the mutual relation between the different religious communities themselves. Here charges of interference, intransigence and exclusiveness are of all too frequent occurrence. There are Jews who suspect any approach on the part of a Christian as a veiled form of proselytism. There are Christians whose professed adherence to what they would claim to be "fundamental principles" leads to the adoption of an uncharitable attitude, not merely to the adherents of another religion, but even to members of another denomination in the same religious group.

### **Principles into Practice.**

These are matters which a Commission on Religious Freedom could not possibly ignore. Both in the preparatory meetings of the British group and at Oxford they were frankly and fully considered. The report embodying the findings of the Commission is brief, but very much to the point, and there are few if any aspects of the problem of religious freedom with which it does not deal either directly or by implication. This is good so far as it goes, but leaves us with the question: what is being done or can be done to translate its principles into practice? Three examples must suffice by way of answer.

First, the Council has been in regular correspondence with the Foreign Office with regard to the inclusion in the Peace Treaties of clauses to safeguard all aspects of religious liberty. Some progress was made in this matter, and the United Kingdom delegation at the Paris Peace Conference secured the acceptance of certain extensions of the clause dealing with fundamental human rights and freedoms in the direction of ensuring a non-discrimination provision in respect of religious bodies.

The effect of this is to provide for non-discrimination on grounds of race, language and religion in respect of freedom to preach, teach and persuade any religious matters. In other words, if persons of one religion are free so to act, persons of all religions must be free to do the same. It does not, however, ensure the granting of religious freedom as such. It merely provides that all religions must be treated on the same basis. The Council will keep the matter under review, working in consultation with the Joint Committee on Religious Liberty set up under the auspices of the British Council of Churches and the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland.

Secondly, the Council has on several occasions been in correspondence with the Foreign Office with regard to the persecution of Roman Catholics in Yugo-Slavia and Ruthenia, and also with regard to the arrest and trial of Archbishop Stepinac of Zagreb. In connection with the arrest of Archbishop Stepinac, the Chairman of the Council's Executive Committee sent the following telegram to the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster :

"Executive Council of Christians and Jews at recent meeting recorded complete sympathy with you in deeply regretted arrest of Archbishop of Zagreb and fully supports request for his release."

And finally, the following paragraph from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Diocesan Message for February 1947, is directly related to one of the most difficult practical problems confronting the Commission on religious freedom—the religious welfare of Jewish refugee children who have found shelter in Christian homes—and fully embodies the spirit of the report's recommendation.

"Many Jewish children and young people, refugees from Nazi oppression, have been brought to this country in recent years by the Refugee Children's Movement without their parents, and are placed in English homes. Questions sometimes arise as to whether these children should be baptised. Clearly they should not be thus divorced from their parental faith without consultation with the person in *loco parentis* to them. Lord Gorell, Chairman of the Committee concerned with refugee children, is by official appointment of the Home Secretary, guardian of all such children in England and Wales. If the question comes before any clergyman, he should write to Lord Gorell before taking any action."

The whole question of religious freedom is, then, and will remain, a primary concern of the Council, as indeed it must, having regard to the first of the Council's aims, which is to combat all forms of racial and religious intolerance. It is a question which in fact touches all our freedoms, for as the fuller report of the Commission expresses it, "only religious freedom gives full opportunity to personality and enables man to realise in community the values that are called civilisation."

# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Religion is an expression of man's sense of responsibility to God, alike for his inner thoughts and for all his deeds, including the discharge of his duty to his fellow-man. This sense of responsibility is centred in the spirit and conscience of each individual. Differences in religious beliefs and practices must therefore be respected, and religious freedom can be fully realised only in proportion as men cease to fear, suspect and hate those who differ from them in religious faith.

1. The religious freedom of individuals and groups should be guaranteed by the law to all alike, within the limits of morality and public order, and so long as the exercise of such freedom is not harmful to other individuals and groups. Religious freedom, thus understood, should include at least the following:—

- (a) freedom from compulsion to do what one's conscience forbids;
- (b) freedom to worship according to conscience and to maintain distinctive religious observances;
- (c) freedom to preach, teach, educate and persuade.

2. It is understood that freedom to teach and educate includes, in particular, freedom of parents to have their children brought up in their own faith. It demands equality under the law in such countries as grant State subvention to denominational schools.

The interests of parents in the religious education of their children, the interests of the children being paramount, may have to be taken up, on the children's behalf, by the religious community with which the parents are (or were) associated. Displaced or orphaned children should normally be restored to the community to which they originally belonged and which claims them, unless, being of mature age, they have made their own free choice of religion, but varying conditions affecting the welfare of such children make it difficult to frame a rule applicable to every single case.

3. Religious convictions can be attained only in freedom and not as the result of compulsion or of improper inducement. Freedom to persuade should be limited to a direct advocacy, and should in no cases be accompanied by any form of economic or social pressure.

The propagation of misstatements of fact affecting religious groups or the incitement to hurtful action against them is contrary to the ideal of freedom of speech, whether such propaganda claims to be religious or not.

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*Report of Commission No. 3. International Conference of Christians and Jews. Oxford, 1946.*

4. We deplore the cynicism and lack of faith which undermine the foundations of ordered human society and along with it of religious freedom itself. In the light of these conditions, upon each religious group rests the responsibility to protect and preserve not only its own integrity and freedom, but the integrity and freedom of all, but further, there rests on it the responsibility of making the fullest contribution to the life of the community as a whole and to the maintenance of religious and moral standards.

## MODERN ANTISEMITISM

Charles Singer.

This comprehensive work\* is unlikely to be replaced as a record of a problem peculiar to the last thirty years. Despite impressions to the contrary, the Jewish problem as we know it is hardly older than that. It is true that before the first world war the position of the Jewish people was anomalous, but the remains of a specifically Jewish civilisation, which determined their separateness, were slowly disintegrating. After 1918, however, the position of Jews was radically changed by the pandemic of nationalism.

This world-wide nationalist movement, while it emphasised Jewish separateness from without, stimulated it also from within. In these last years this separateness has become a major symptom of the sickness of our society. It is the peculiar misfortune of our society in general and of the Jewish people in particular that the erstwhile fading Jewish separateness has been used and is being used with remarkable skill as a political weapon by parties whose ends have basically nothing to do with the Jewish people or their religion. This is, the main theme of Dr. Parkes' work which opens with a review of the situation of Jews throughout the world before 1914 and then, in three successive parts, considers the scene in Palestine, in East European countries under the Minority Treaties, and in the U.S.S.R. A fourth and final part is devoted to modern antisemitism as a political weapon.

Nowhere is the objective approach of Dr. Parkes more valuable than in considering Palestine where each party, including our own Government, has been the victim of circumstances. For, in the relatively happy days before 1919, there was no reason to anticipate friction with the Arabs when Jewish colonisation in Palestine first started (1882); or on the rejection by the Zionists of alternative lands (1903); or even at the time of the Balfour declaration (1917). To judge what is happening now, it is important to bear these things in mind along with evidence for a satisfactory relationship between Arabs and Jews in the last fifty years.

\* "The Emergence of the Jewish Problem 1878-1939" for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Oxford University Press, 1946; James Parkes, price 15/- net.

Nevertheless there is a stubborn fact which few seem to have grasped. In Palestine there are two peoples differing not only in history, customs, language, and religion, but also most profoundly in the stage and type of civilisation that they have reached. However specific and peculiar be the culture of the Jews of Palestine it is a fact that they bring with them a substantial heritage of the 'Christian' culture of Europe. If that be a valid gift to humanity then the two peoples can make effective contact only if it be passed also to the Arabs. Palestine might then be at peace and the Jewish problem on its way to solution. But to effect the passage will be, at best, a very long and difficult task. It is certainly an impossible one until the great nationalist pandemic begins to abate, and of that there is no sign. Religions all claim to override nationalists, and all the many religious systems that face each other in the Holy Land speak the words of peace, but none regards the others as carriers of peace. In Palestine creeds bring no reconciliation.

### **Jews and Arabs.**

A permanently happy relationship between Arabs and Jews might well have seemed hopeful at the time of the 'Treaty of Friendship' of 1919 between the Amir Faysal as the Arab 'Representative' and Dr. Weizmann as the Jewish. But, as Dr. Parkes points out, neither party was either legally or effectively in control of Palestine, and goodwill without responsibility is of little value in political matters. However admirable the sentiments and intentions of Dr. Weizmann and the Amir, it was in fact the British Government and neither Arabs nor Jews that controlled the situation.

Developments among Arab peoples elsewhere, as well as cataclysmic events in Europe, have since changed the whole scene with volcanic completeness. Add to this that the prosperity brought by Jewish enterprises has prompted Arab immigration into Palestine; that nationalist consciousness has developed along familiar lines in the Arab world; that there has been a discovery or invention of a hitherto unknown Palestinian 'nationality' and, as the latest birth of time, a Transjordanian 'nationality' and that these are events of just those years when Jewish pressure for immigration was forced by the convulsion in Germany. Many similar factors have contributed to a situation in which, as Dr. Parkes expresses it,

"the British Government, who had yielded to almost everyone else in the world, was adamant where these unhappy victims of persecution were concerned."

The whole affair is a tragedy of errors made no less tragic by the goodwill that prompted the errors.

The next section of the book shows how the securities that were later assured for the whole world by the 'Four Freedoms' of the Atlantic Charter were promised also by the Minority Treaties of Versailles. A few years ago it was natural to take Poland as the conspicuous example of the mis-working of the Minority Treaties. To-day other examples must be sought. Polish Jewry is now represented by less than a hundred thousand unhappy survivors out of three millions. The Jewries of Hungary and Rumania have been reduced by sheer murder to a mere fraction of their former numbers.

Dr. Parkes points out that the minority treaty in Poland failed, not because no attempt was made to implement its terms, but because the political, social and economic state of the country was such as to make its effective working impracticable. To recognise this is not to minimise the seriousness of the antisemitic movement in Poland, the history of which since the treaty of Versailles throws into relief, Dr. Parkes thinks, the complicity of many high ranking Roman Catholics with the parties of violent antisemitism. A study of the two other countries (Rumania and Hungary) would have revealed that the same is at least equally true of the Orthodox Church of Rumania, and that the Protestants of Hungary could not be wholly exculpated. Dr. Parkes is rightly silent here concerning Germany, since Jews have substantially ceased to exist in German-speaking lands, except for the few seeking to escape.

The very existence of the Minority Treaties made at Versailles after the last war shows, of course, that those concerned did not expect Palestine to accommodate all Jews from lands of persecution. But the complete failure of the minority treaties explains—it cannot excuse—the fanatical objection of Palestinian Jews to accept the status of a minority. It cannot furnish any palliation of Jewish nationalist excesses, though it does not need great clinical experience to know that excited lunatics are liable to attack their best friends. But the position will indeed be desperate if minorities Jewish and other, are to be given no defence more substantial than documents issued by a doubtfully permanent, certainly distant and professionally uninterested international body.

### **Jews in U.S.S.R.**

In Russia, Dr. Parkes points out, nothing is more remarkable than the complete change in the position of Jews from the era of pogroms inspired by the Czarist Government, and later by the anti-revolutionary armies of Petliura and Denikin. But the Bolshevik Government, unlike the other Eastern European states, not only proclaimed the equal citizenship of ethnic minorities, but took effective steps to secure it. The position was defined by the tenth Congress of the Party in March 1921:

"In addition to the peoples already mentioned, possessing a definite class structure and occupying definite territory, there exists within the R.S.F.S.R. various minorities interspersed among compact majorities of other nations, who in most cases do not possess a definite territory . . . Now that national privileges have been abolished and the equality of nationalities established, the right of national minorities to free development is guaranteed by the very nature of the Soviet system, the duty of the Party is to help them to make the fullest possible use of the right of free development which they have secured."

Antisemitism was made a punishable offence by decree of the Council of Peoples Commissars on 27th July, 1918. Nevertheless, in the period when the U.S.S.R. regarded religion as a hostile influence, the Jewish religion was given no more tolerance than the Christian. With settled conditions, both have been permitted increasing expression. Dr. Parkes shows economic changes affecting Jews in Russia, and especially the decline of separateness of the Jewish population in the U.S.S.R.

In Part IV, "Modern Antisemitism as a Political Weapon," after an historical survey, Dr. Parkes points out that

"antisemitism only takes root, with all its absurdities, because there actually are unsolved problems connected with the world situation of the Jews. The non-existent Jew of antisemitic propaganda carries conviction because it can be tied up with actual abnormalities in the position of Jews, and with ancient prejudices and superstitions in the minds of non-Jews."

#### Further

"antisemitism is a most potent weapon against (a) society as a whole. Hitler was making no mistake when he seized on it as the easiest and most effective way of undermining the unity and strength of his opponents . . . This is a non-Jewish, not a Jewish problem."

"It may be that in many parts of Europe the bestiality of the policy of extermination adopted in 1942 may cause an ultimate revulsion of feeling among the general population. But it would be unwise to expect antisemitism to die down of itself. The millions spent by the Nazis, the millions of pamphlets circulated, the psychological shrewdness of their attacks, these have left results. In Canada, in Latin America, in South Africa, as well as in the United States, men only read of what has happened in Europe. They did not see it before their eyes. They had no personal experience of it; and the feeling of revulsion which they might temporarily experience was soon lost among the other horrors and excitements of total war. To discover effective means for dealing with this world-wide scourge will tax the skill of statesmen and educationalists for many years."

In his Epilogue, Dr. Parkes reverts to the Palestine problem and to the view that he has expressed elsewhere that the solution cannot be on a legalistic basis—in which both sides will always find support for conflicting claims—but must be on something that touches the heart.

"If the twentieth century is to become the century of the common man, I suggest that the new basis is the practical basis of need."



Neither law nor force, nor both together will establish peace in the world without that which is "the end of the commandment." There is something which is higher than faith and hope—and it is necessary to add—than consistency.

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## A FESTIVAL OF RENEWAL

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PASSOVER AND EASTER

This year the Jewish Festival of Passover coincides exactly with the Christian celebration of Easter. In these days the average Christian understands as little of what it is that his Jewish neighbour is celebrating in Passover as the average Jew understands of the significance of Easter. This is a pity, for while there are quite fundamental differences between these two great religious festivals, it is also a fact that in some respects they come very near to each other.

It is significant that both festivals occur in the Spring, for both emphasise the idea of renewal or re-birth. This is reflected in part by the fact that Jew and Christian alike turn to the Song of Songs for readings traditionally associated both with the Passover and Easter. What man is he who, whether Christian or Jew, does not thrill to the passage beginning:

"My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

For the Jews Passover was formerly an agricultural feast, marking the beginning of the barley-harvest in Palestine, and celebrated by the presentation in the Temple of an omer of barley. Easter has never been in that sense an agricultural festival, though it is a natural instinct that finds expression in the adornment of churches with special flowers on Easter Sunday.

The primary significance of both festivals, however, lies in the historical events they commemorate. "Passover" writes Dr. Lehmann in his admirable book on the 'Jewish Festivals,' "is essentially an episode in our history, commemorating the birth of Israel as a nation." It is above all a family festival and is celebrated in the home where all the members of the family and their guests—often including non-Jews, for the Jewish home is always renowned for its hospitality—gather round the table spread for the Passover meal. Every item in the meal itself symbolises some aspect of the life of

the Jews in Egypt, while after supper the ceremonial reading of the Haggadah vividly recalls the way in which the Lord delivered His people from the land of Egypt and from the power of Pharaoh and his hosts.

But while it commemorates a past deliverance, the Passover also looks forward to the future, and the cry "Next year in Jerusalem" is wrung from the heart of a people which has known more than any other human family the sorrows of separation and dispersion. It is inevitable at the present time that that expression of an undying hope should be given a political and nationalist character by many who keep the feast; but that is not, nor ever has been, the only or the deepest truth enshrined in it.

For Passover has a universal as well as a particular significance. "The deliverance from Egypt," wrote the late Chief Rabbi, "is to be not only from physical but also from spiritual slavery. Israel is to be freed from all heathen influences and consecrated to the service of God." It is particularly interesting in this connection to find Dr. Hertz quoting with approval some words from another great Jewish scholar, the late Dr. C. G. Montefiore, from whom in many respects he differed so fundamentally.

"The Exodus," wrote Dr. Montefiore in a passage which Dr. Hertz has quoted in his commentary on the Pentateuch,

"is not only one of the greatest events and epochs in the history of the Jews, but one of the greatest events and epochs in the history of the world. To that successful escape Europe, America and Australia are as much indebted as the Jews themselves. And the men of Europe, the men of America and the men of Australia might join with us Jews in the celebrating of Passover."

The festival of Easter, too, is deeply rooted in history and commemorates the events connected with the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, events which the Christian can explain in no other way than by saying that God raised up Jesus from the dead and made him to be the head of the Church which is his body. The characteristic observance of the festival in almost every section of the Church is the Easter Communion which, for the Christian, is both the commemoration of Christ's last celebration of the Passover with his disciples on the eve of his death and also the realisation of his living presence in the sacramental communion.

Between these two festivals, the Jewish and the Christian, there are obvious and fundamental differences which it is quite beyond the purpose of this article to discuss. But there are also points of common interest and concern which merit the close attention of members of both communities.

In the first place, it is unhappily the case that Jews have all too

often had occasion to fear the celebration of Easter by Christians who have made it an occasion for attacking their Jewish neighbours, charging them with responsibility for the crucifixion of Christ. Only the absence of any sense of historical perspective, coupled with ignorance of what the Passover meant to the Jews of Christ's own day, can explain such behaviour. Here, then, is one very good reason why the Christian should know more of the meaning of the Passover.

On this one of the most relevant comments is that of Dorothy Sayers, who, in the introduction to her play-cycle, "The Man Born to be King," writes:

"Tear off the disguise of the Jacobean idiom, go back to the homely and vigorous Greek of Mark or John, translate it into its current English counterpart, and there every man may see his own face. We played the parts in that tragedy, nineteen and a half centuries since, and perhaps are playing them to-day, in the same good faith and in the same ironic ignorance. But to-day we cannot see the irony, for we the audience, are now the actors and do not know what we are doing if the original drama is shown to us again, with ourselves in the original parts."

And secondly, and at a deeper level, there is the fact that these festivals recall, not a story of human achievement but an affirmation of divine action on the plane of history in an hour of dire human need. It is an affirmation much needed at the present time. The Christian, focussing his attention on the fact of resurrection has tended to concentrate on the other-worldly aspects of his religion and to ignore or minimise its relevance to the here and now. The Jew, on the other hand, by force of circumstances much more acutely conscious of the problems of this present life, has tended to concentrate on the national aspects of the Passover story, and in these days, despairing of divine intervention, to translate them into terms of political activity.

For Christian and Jew alike, it is important to reaffirm the universal significance of the Passover and Easter stories, proclaiming as they do the sovereignty of God and His redemptive purpose for all mankind. Traditionally, the Christian celebration of Easter has been steeped in the language of the Jewish Passover, so much so that an Easter hymn, very popular in some sections of the Church a generation ago, opened with these two verses which will express the truth in which both Christian and Jew may find inspiration and encouragement at this season.

"The foe behind, the deep before  
Our hosts have dared and passed the sea:  
And Pharaoh's warriors strew the shore,  
And Israel's ransomed tribes are free.

Lift up, lift up your voices now!  
The whole wide world rejoices now!  
The Lord hath triumphed gloriously!  
The Lord shall reign victoriously!"

# FROM THE SECRETARY'S NOTEBOOK

## APOLOGY OR EXPLANATION.

We apologise for the late arrival of this issue of "Common Ground." An explanation in the circumstances, is perhaps hardly necessary. We, too, have been affected by the recent disorganisation of the country's industrial life. Although, even now, we are still a very long way from normal, and paper as well as labour shortages may continue to affect our regular appearance, we shall do our best to keep faith with our readers.

## INCREASING SUPPORT.

Since the beginning of the year we have enrolled 250 new Associate Members. This is good, but not good enough! We need the support of as many people of goodwill as we can possibly enlist. Every new member is a fresh point of contact with a still wider circle of potential support. Please help us then to extend our influence. And if you feel we are not helping you sufficiently through "Common Ground," do please say so! There's nothing worse than talking (or writing) into space.

## "COMMON SENSE."

We continue to receive, and are grateful for the monthly magazine of the South African Societies of Jews and Chris-

tians. The January 1947 issue is the first number of volume eight, runs to forty pages, and contains several articles on general problems of common interest to Christian and Jew. We congratulate our colleagues on their eighth birthday. May *we* be as vigorous and healthy when we reach *our* eighth milestone.

## HENRIETTA SZOLD.

The story of a great American woman, the daughter of a Baltimore Rabbi, who devoted the earlier years of her life to social work in the U.S.A., and its later years to pioneer welfare work in Palestine has been recorded in a medium length "documentary." The film, which has no political axe to grind, deals impressively with the work and achievement of one of the great women of our time. It requires a 16mm. talkie apparatus, takes about thirty-five minutes to run, and may be hired on application to Youth Aliyah, Woburn House, Upper Woburn Place, London, W.C.1 from whom all details may be obtained.

## ANTISEMITISM IN EUROPE.

Plans for the Emergency Conference on Antisemitism in Europe are well in hand. Through the generosity of our

American colleagues an organising Secretary, Dr. Pierre Visseur, has recently been appointed and an office set up in Geneva. Dr. Visseur is of Swiss nationality and a lawyer by training. He attended the recent Assembly of the United Nations in New York as the representative of a Swiss newspaper, and is well qualified by training, experience and outlook to play an important part in this field of human relations. We wish him well in this important undertaking.

#### DEPUTATION TO HOME SECRETARY.

A deputation representing the Council's Executive Committee was received by the Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon. J. Chuter Ede, on February 10th. The deputation raised two main issues; first, the need for making clear to the British public that the Anglo-Jewish community had repeatedly condemned the activities of terrorists in Palestine, which it was powerless to prevent; and secondly the danger to the national life of the exploitation of antisemitic propaganda by Fascist organisations in London and other parts of the country. The deputation also referred to the recent desecration of Jewish Synagogues in London and elsewhere.

The Home Secretary, who made a full and detailed reply to the points raised, assured the deputation that he would continue as opportunity arose to emphasise both his own and the Government's conviction

that Jews as a whole must not be held responsible for the actions of a small group of fanatics. He also made it clear that the matters raised in connection with the growth of antisemitic propaganda in Great Britain were receiving the closest attention of his department.

Mr. Ede expressed his great satisfaction at the existence and work of the Council, referring particularly to the importance of its activities in the sphere of youth organisations.

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## BOOK NOTES

"The Bible," says Mr. Seton Pollock, in the opening chapter of this most stimulating book, "is like a cathedral window, from the outside dull and meaningless, obscured by the dust of the market place, but inside full of meaning, with rich, ancient colours to give it beauty." The purpose of this particular book is "to give an inside view of one section of the Bible—the Wisdom Literature," the books of *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes* and *Job*.

Mr. Pollock is clearly a keen student of the Bible. As a layman he is unusually well-versed in the findings and suggestions of the modern Old Testament scholar. As a layman too, he is well and savingly versed in the facts of human life and experience. He is also a Christian for whom "the fulfilment and

crown of Hebrew culture was the Incarnation," but as a Christian too, he recognises that "we cannot deny our roots and prosper."

"Stubborn Soil," therefore is likely to be of particular interest and value to the Christian reader of "Common Ground" who will find in it much that will help to a new and richer understanding of the Jewish background of his own faith as well as much illuminating comment on human life and experience.

Those who are suspicious of the "modern approach" to the Bible will find little to disturb them here. There is no obtrusion of the mechanics of "historical" or "textual criticism," but only a skilful blending of some of their findings into the elucidation of some of the most fascinating passages in the Bible.

The book is divided into three parts—the first, based on the book of *Proverbs*, is called "A Formula for Living"; the second, on *Ecclesiastes*, "The Way of Disillusion"; and the third on *Job*, "The Impact of Disaster." To these is added an extremely interesting fourth section—an anthology of passages from each of these three books, so arranged as "to lay bare their Spirit and structure without the distraction of those embellishments and digressions which are a feature of oriental literature."

Altogether a most readable and stimulating book.

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## GERMANY TO-DAY

### The Rebirth of the German Church.

By Stewart Hermann. S.C.M. 10/6

### In Darkest Germany.

By Victor Gollancz. Gollancz. 8/6

Stewart Hermann, the author of the first of these two important books on Germany to-day, was minister of the American Church in Berlin from 1936 to 1942. In 1945 he joined the Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches with a commission to work towards the re-establishment of relations with the Churches in Germany. For months he travelled "by jeep, command car, army sedan, train and plane all over the prostrate country." In hundreds of instances he was the first foreign civilian to make contact with German churchmen after the cessation of hostilities. He writes, therefore, with the authority of an almost unique experience and in a vivid style that holds the attention of his readers throughout.

Although the story is concerned mainly with the life of the Protestant Churches it contains several references to the spirit of friendliness and co-operation between Protestants and Catholics in the early days of the Nazi regime, and which

"found its best expression in the practical long-range and short-range tasks which religion in the Reich faced immediately after the Nazi collapse."

There are references too to the deep sense of guilt which many Christians in Germany feel

with regard to the treatment of Jews.

Besides the rubble of bomb-shattered buildings, there is a great deal of religious rubble to be cleared up by Christians in Germany today—the rubble of false doctrines and of the various attempts to Nazify the Church. Already the leaders of the Church have made good progress in clearing away this debris, and there are many indications of a spirit of deep and genuine penitence and of the restoration of sound teaching in the Churches. But, as Martin Niemöller said in a sermon at Stuttgart, on the first post-way Day of Repentance and Prayer in November, 1945:

"it is not enough that the Church preach God's Word. The world must see what we are *doing*. We must resolve that this never happen again."

But the problems of the German Church to-day are by no means limited to dealing with the aftermath of National Socialism. There are problems—deeply distressing ones—consequent upon the Potsdam agreement. These are as much a challenge to the Christian outside Germany as to those within the country itself.

The three concluding chapters paint a grim picture of conditions in the Russian zone, of the plight of the thousands of displaced and deported persons in Germany, and of the overall problem of the food and clothing shortages.

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Conditions in the British zone, at least from the point of

view of food and clothing, are the subject of Mr. Victor Gollancz's "In Darkest Germany," an account of a recent six weeks' tour of the British zone, during which he visited a number of towns, concentrating largely on Hamburg, Dusseldorf and the Ruhr. His approach to every aspect of German life as it is to-day, was that of a self-appointed sceptic, his object being to present to the British public a truthful account not only of what he saw, but what he felt. To this end he cross-examined British and German officials, checking one against the other, and often re-examining both.

The picture which Mr. Gollancz presents as a result of these probings is not a pleasant one, for it is a portrayal of almost unbelievable conditions. Dwellings which defy description, hospitals overcrowded and ill-equipped, widespread disease and emaciation, and a growing despair, are graphically described and vividly portrayed in some seventy pages of most disturbing photographs.

On the inadequacy of the food ration, Mr. Gollancz has a good deal to say. Though a minimum calorific figure has been fixed officially, in actual fact the German people are getting considerably less owing to lack of supplies. The same conditions prevail with regard to clothing, which is almost unobtainable.

In his search for information bearing on every aspect of German life, he found the

same heart-breaking conditions—factories compulsorily closed down (under the Potsdam agreement), men thrown out of employment in what appeared to be a ruthless determination to kill all industrial initiative regardless of the effect upon the individual.

Though he admits that the Control Commission are doing an admirable job in many respects, he gives the impression that there is a good deal of the Nazi ruthlessness in their methods, and often lack of appreciation of the ultimate results of such methods.

The overall picture is a disturbing one, and as Mr. Gollancz says:

"a great deal of the present trouble can be remedied by ourselves alone, and only by radical changes both in the spirit with which we approach our task and in the method and machinery of administration."

He challenges the British people when he bids them:

"stop behaving like inefficient totalitarians and try a little liberalism or Christianity instead."

A strange challenge from a Jew, some may think, but Mr. Gollancz's own comment on that is illuminating:

"I feel called upon to help suffering Germans," he says, "precisely because I am a Jew: but not at all for the reason imagined. It is a question neither of 'coals of fire' nor of what is called, and so often miscalled, sentimentality. It is a question rather of plain, straight commonsense, undeflected by that very sentimentality which deflects the judgment and corrupts the spirit of so many. To me three propositions seem self-evident. The first is that

nothing can save the world but a general act of repentance in place of the present self-righteous insistence on the wickedness of others; for we have all sinned, and continue to sin most horribly. The second is that good treatment and not bad treatment makes men good. And the third is—to drop into the hideous collective language which is now so much the mode—that unless you treat a man well when he has treated you ill you just get nowhere, or rather you give further impetus to evil and head straight for human annihilation."

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These two books should rouse the complacent and those who hold the view that the Germans are reaping a just reward. Of both it is true to say what Stewart Hermann has written of his own: "This is not a 'poor Germany' book. It has not been written either to insist that the German people are better than you may have thought, or to belabour—for the satisfaction of the 'All-Germans-are-Nazi' school—the popular thesis that they are even worse than was imagined." They are two most valuable contributions to the study of what is for Christians and Jew alike, one of the most urgent problems of our time.

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*We have received a number of other publications, mostly of the pamphlet variety, to which we regret we have no space to refer in this issue. We hope to return to them later.*



